



Aloha

From Our House to Yours

www.RonaldHouseHawaii.org

Newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities® Hawaii

Issue 1, Winter 2024

Taking Care of One Another at the Ronald McDonald House Hawaii

“The Ronald House community goes that extra mile to make you feel at home.” - Mom Echo Yarberry

During Arthor Worley’s young life, he’s spent more time in hospitals and at the Ronald McDonald House Hawaii than he has on his family’s farm on the Big Island. His dog didn’t even know him when he went home for one of the few short visits between his four-month and first birthday in November 2023.

At his home-away-from-home at the Ronald McDonald House on Oahu, Arthor crawls and even walks around on the floors. Even though he is immunocompromised, his parents trust that the House is sanitary. As they play on the ground with him and cook meals together, they feel a sense of being home.

The struggles that led to him living at the Ronald House started when Arthor was just four-months-old. His parents noticed a slight paralysis on one side of his face that looked and tested like Bell’s Palsy. But his mother Echo insisted upon further medical testing, a blood test at least, to confirm the diagnosis.

The blood test revealed that his white blood cell counts were concerningly high. His pediatrician said he should be medevacked to Oahu immediately for more tests at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children.

Following the medical airlift, Arthor arrived at the Pediatric ICU, and was eventually diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

The disease would require long-term treatment on Oahu. It changed everything for him and his parents. Instead of being on the Big Island with family and friends, they started the chemo process on Oahu, which requires days to weeks at a time at the hospital and staying nearby for appointments and monitoring. They were referred to the Ronald McDonald House, where they’ve stayed since April 2023.

To survive, Echo tries to keep things light and go outside as much as possible before inpatient treatments start again. She continues to do her crafts, even taking a sewing machine to the hospital when she stays crib-side with Arthor. Dad, Lars, does chores and helps Arthor learn to walk. The couple stays strong and supports one another by writing “love notes” in the journal they leave in their room at the Judd Hillside Ronald House. Reading the note when spending the night alone while the other parent is at the hospital gives them strength.



Dad Lars Worley, Son Arthor, and Mom Echo Yarberry

“We are lucky to have each other and to be near family and friends who are on the Big Island. Grandparents and friends have visited the hospital and the Ronald House here and there,” Echo said. “When we are going out of our minds, knowing we are still here almost a year after arriving at the Ronald House, it’s comforting to talk with others who are in the same phase of treatment.”

“Community here has been sweet—from the friends we’ve made going through the same thing to volunteers and House staff. It’s the little touches that make a difference and give you a sense of normalcy: the

birthday and anniversary cards and gifts; the House holiday decorations; the meal donations; the compassion and smiles from volunteers and staff.”

“Everyone here is taking care of one another.”

Arthor is growing stronger every day, responding well to cancer treatment. After months of treatments and hope that they will be going home, the Worleys can visualize themselves back on the Big Island. They have even scheduled a date to ship their car home. With fewer treatments and more visits home, Arthor is getting more comfortable on the family’s farm.

“Now, when we go home, Arthor pulls the dog’s tail and they are on the path to being good friends,” Echo said.

Message from the Board Chair



Dr. Lois Chiu

Aloha,

A colleague approached me to serve on the Board of RMHC Hawaii noting I would meet wonderful people, gain valuable experience and be involved in a charity that holds tremendous meaning in my line of work.

I am a neonatologist at Kaiser Permanente. I take care of babies who are born too prematurely or sick. Some babies are born no larger than a football and barely weighing a pound. They require lengthy specialized care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), which in Hawaii, are only on Oahu.

Imagine the anguish a parent feels at that moment trying to comprehend their baby will be hospitalized for several months away from home. They want to be with their baby during this time, but what will they do for housing? This is where RMHC Hawaii comes in.

During my past 14 years of working in Hawaii, I have seen countless families helped by RMHC. I hear them speak fondly of the House with gratitude for all it provides, but most importantly, the ability to stay together to be near their baby. RMHC's goal of keeping families close plays an integral role in the growth and healing of sick children.

As board chair, working with staff and other volunteer board members, we're enacting more positive changes. The second Hospitality Cart at the Kapiolani Medical Center will

open in the coming months, providing snacks, beverages and other items for families while visiting the NICU / PICU. The first cart opened in September 2022 at Kaiser Moanalua Medical Center and continues to be a welcomed amenity.

I cannot write this message without recognizing RMHC's recently retired President—Jerri Chong. For 23 years she guided this organization with passion, enthusiasm, persistence, and grace. Under her leadership, the organization grew, adding programs and expanding services so that more families could be helped during their time of need. On behalf of the Board, staff, and community, we again thank Jerri for her years of service. We already miss her!

Currently, the Board is engaged in the process of selecting a new President. We are confident whoever is selected will continue to serve the House's important mission and bring forward innovative programs and resources. During the transition, rest assured, both Houses continue to operate smoothly welcoming and caring for families.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

Lois D. Chiu, MD
Chief of Neonatology
Hawaii Permanente Medical Group

"Aloha From Our House to Yours," the newsletter of Ronald McDonald House Charities Hawaii (RMHC Hawaii), is published three times a year. **Editor:** Kris Reisdorf, **Printing:** Ryan's Graphics Corp.

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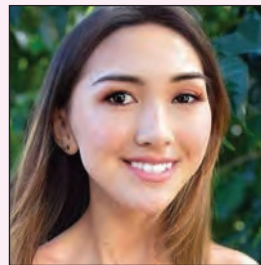
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*In Loving Memory of
Ruth "Ruthie" Mersburgh
October 28, 2001 -
December 4, 2023*

Ruthie stayed at the Ronald McDonald House with her family, where she courageously beat stage 4 cancer at age five, yet endured lifelong effects for the next 17 years. Ruthie never complained about her health. She led a fulfilling life, making the most of her time on earth, and remaining committed to helping others through her community service. Her memory lives on forever at the Ronald House, as we all strive to ensure that families with sick children, like Ruthie, can stay together and close to the essential care they need to heal and thrive.

Around the House



Newborn Kiara in the hospital NICU at 25 weeks.

“Just rest assured, it’s going to be okay!” says Cisco Medinas about being referred to Ronald House Hawaii for lodging and essential services. Four years ago, his wife, Sade, went into preterm labor during a vacation on Maui. She was medevacked to Oahu, and he was faced with pricey hotel rates and the possibility of renting a van to sleep in so he and his older daughter Sofia could be near her. Sade’s pregnancy complications and condition after the birth had Cisco and Sofia running from NICU to ICU.

The Medinas family stayed with us for three and a half months. Cisco said Ronald McDonald House gave them one less thing to worry about, which allowed him to focus on their newborn, Kiara, and his wife’s well-being and recovery.

The Medinas family recently returned to Hawaii, and while they were here, they visited the Judd Hillside House and toured the Family Recreation Center. Their preemie Kiara is now a spirited and healthy 4-year-old. We are so happy they are all doing well!

Quote from Mom Sade in June 2019:

“Ronald McDonald House was a safe haven. They provided a place for us to eat and sleep, somewhere for me to heal, recover, and rest at ease while knowing that my baby was in the hospital and growing healthy. Ronald House also provided a positive environment where I was not alone. Others in similar situations gave me comfort, the staff gave me hope and were uplifting.”



Mom Sade, Kiara, Dad Cisco, and Sofia return to visit their home-away-from-home.



Big sister Sofia (left) and Kiara (right) with a message of thanks for the support they received at the Ronald House.

Faith Tesei, Gerald Santos and their daughter Adaleigh (Addy) have stayed at our Ronald House since September 2023 while their preemie twin boys grow strong enough to return home. The family got some needed help from Grandmas Genevieve and Del, Grandpa Henry, then Auntie Holly.

Addy has been a ray of sunshine around the Ronald House for other families and RMHC Hawaii’s staff and volunteers, especially around the holidays. She’s growing up before our eyes and is a great big sister to the twins.

At the Ronald McDonald House, we believe in keeping families close to each other and the medical care they need. Having family nearby is a powerful healer. At the time of this writing, they are hopeful that the whole family can return home to Guam within a month.



From L to R: Addy, Mom Faith, and Dad Gerald with newborn Avery.



Newborn Avery receives his first gift from Santa Claus at the Ronald House Family Christmas Party.



Grandma Genevieve plays with Addy on the jungle gym at our Judd Hillside House.



Faith and Addy cooking together at the Judd Hillside House.

Share A Night Benefit Gala & Auction

November 18, 2023

Mahalo to all our sponsors, donors, vendors, and everyone who attended our Share a Night Benefit Gala and Auction—***Mālama Kekahi I Kekahi (To Take Care of One Another)***, helping to support our Ronald McDonald House programs. Over 400 attendees enjoyed cocktails, delicious Hawaiian food, heartwarming comments from past Ronald House families, and premiere entertainment, including Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom, Maunalua, and Augie T.

RMHC President Jerri Chong was the honoree, celebrated for her compassionate leadership and the positive impact she has made on so many lives over the past 23 years. She retired at the end of December. Her vision of families staying together while their children receive medical care nearby fostered 'ohana unity and community support throughout the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific.

A special thank you to Entertainment Director Nancy Bernal, Emcee Al Waterson, Auctioneer Eric Schiff, and the many volunteers and community groups who gave their time and talents to make the evening a success.

Jerri Chong, the evening's honoree, is adorned with lei in honor of her 23 years as RMHC Hawai'i President.



RMHC Hawai'i Board Chair Dr. Lois Chiu, Board Member Duane Seabolt, RMHC Hawai'i President Jerri Chong, and Tommy Silva



Chiew Hwee Nyeo and Board Member Markus Staib



Chris Cheung, Lily Cheung, Victor Lim, John Cheung, Louis Cheung, and Board Member Vincent Lim



Nancy Bernal and Al Waterson



Board Member Dr. Barry and his wife Jennifer Mizuo (left) with Ina and Jonathan Sim



Stanley and Beth Lum



Tishelle Hepa, from Kaua'i, shared her story of staying at the Ronald House when she was 9-years-old and being treated for leukemia. Tishelle, with her husband and children (pictured here) were accompanied by 'ohana, including her mother, Trinette, who also spoke.



Board Members Kukui Claydon (second from left), Dr. Dylan Bothamley, and friends



Mālama kekahi / kekahi

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The Westin Hapuna Beach Resort • Bruce & Aileen Yanagihara • Melissa Yara & Family



Other Ways the Community Supports Us



The Ronald House keiki were thrilled with Punahou student, **Shane Komeiji's**, donation of squishmallows and plushies.



Our sincere thanks to the **Department of Public Safety Sheriffs Recruit Class** for their incredible support of our Gala set up and break down, as well as holiday decoration prep!



Mahalo to volunteers from **Marriott's Ko Olina Beach Club** who prepared a delicious meal, plus cookies! Our families loved it. Pictured here: RMHC President Jerri Chong (right) and Director of House Operations Kanoe Paauhau.



RMHC families really appreciated the donation of toys and gift cards from **Punahou Athletics' James Kakos**.



Director of Development, **Candace Asam-Lopez** (center), accepted a monetary donation from representatives of **Hawaii HFMA**. RMHC was chosen as the recipient charity by the attendees at their learning conference.



We are so grateful to the students and teachers at **Kaiser High School** for keeping our families happy and full with a wonderful Sunday dinner.



Our friends from **Cintas Corporation**, including **Jen Shine** and **Niamh Brett**, stopped by with donations of toys and premade food for our families.



Our big-hearted friends at **Southwest Airlines** donated toys, blankets, meals, and even housecleaning!

Other Ways the Community Supports Us



Our families were humbled by an abundance of food for a Thanksgiving Day feast from **New York Life Insurance Hawaii**, and a donation received by House Manager Karl Cubangbang.



We were blessed with a pre-Thanksgiving meal prepared by student volunteers at **Hawaii Baptist Academy**.



The kind folks from the **Kiwanis Club of Honolulu** donated household supplies, canned goods, gift cards, and a monetary donation.

McFun-Raiser Program

Here's how you can raise money for your school, team, or club.

Every day, more and more organizations are discovering the fundraising power of the McFun-Raiser Coupon Book Program. It's really simple and it really works!

Purchase the coupon booklets for \$6 from Ronald McDonald House. Your group sells them to the community for \$10, and earns \$4 for each one sold. The book is valued at \$55, so everyone is a winner!

Each McFun-Raiser booklet contains coupons for **McDonald's Hawaii Food Items**.

- 1 FREE FROZEN CARBONATED BEVERAGE (Any Size)
- 1 FREE small order of WORLD FAMOUS FRIES® (Small)
- 1 FREE CHEESEBURGER
- 1 FREE MCMUFFIN® BREAKFAST SANDWICH when you purchase one of equal or greater value.
- 1 FREE 4-PC. CHICKEN McNUGGETS® HAPPY MEAL® when you purchase any MEDIUM COMBO MEAL.



And there's more! It also includes:

- 1 FREE youth admission with the purchase of a regular price adult admission at Honolulu Theatre for Youth.
- 1 FREE keiki admission with the purchase of a PLAY YOUR WAY adult admission at The LineUp at Wai Kai.

Some restrictions apply on coupons. Coupons are valid through December 31, 2024.

For more information, visit RonaldHouseHawaii.org or call (808) 892-1907.

Wish List

Paper Towels • Gallon and Quart Ziploc Bags • Paper Plates • iPhone • Printer/Copier paper, Letter Size • 8" Sissors

HOSPITALITY CART ITEMS

Individually wrapped snacks • K-Cup pods • Adult coloring books • Adult small craft kits • Adult journals

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For information, visit our event website:
apps.ronaldhousehawaii.org/redshoe5k



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